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SUBJECT: THE SOCIALIST CONGRESS: AN ASSESSMENT

REF: (A) ROME 3620, (B) ROME 3727

1. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SOCIALISTS (PSI) ORGANIZED AND CONDUCTED A "UNITARY" CONGRESS--BY PRIOR AGREEMENT AMONG THE OLD GUARD FACTION LEADERS--MASKS BOTH THE UNITY ACHIEVED ON ITS BASIC POLICY OBJECTIVE, THE DISPUTE OVER TACTICS, AND THE FERMENT AND CHANGE WITHIN THE PARTY. THE POLICY OBJECTIVE ON WHICH THE PARTY IS CLEARLY UNITED IS SIMPLY STATED: TO MOVE ITALY AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TOWARD DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. THIS IS THE OLD "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT" TO BE REALIZED WHEN THE PCI HAS BROKEN WITH MOSCOW AND BECOME DEMOCRATIC, IN THE HOPED-FOR CIRCUMSTANCE OF GREATER EQUALITY BETWEEN THE ELECTORAL STRENGTHS OF THE TWO PARTIES. ALL ACCEPTED THE "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT" AS THE LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE, BUT THE IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATED TO WHAT THE PSI DOES IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM.

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2. IN TERMS OF TACTICS, THE CONGRESS WAS UNITED ON

THE PROPOSITION THAT THE PARTY WOULD NO LONGER SUPPORT MEASURES OR GOVERNMENTS WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE MOVEMENT TOWARD DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. THIS MEANS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT IT WILL NOT GO BACK TO AN OLD STYLE CENTER-LEFT (PRIMARILY BECAUSE THE OLD CENTER-LEFT IS SEEN AS NOT HAVING MOVED THE COUNTRY TOWARD SOCIALISM) AND THAT IT WILL NOT ACCEPT AN A PRIORI EXCLUSION OF COMMUNIST SUPPORT FOR MEASURES OR GOVERNMENTS WHICH THE PSI SUPPORTS OR IN WHICH IT MAY PARTICIPATE. THE LATTER POINT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PSI WILL INSIST ON COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION OR SUPPORT FOR ANY GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THE PSI PARTICIPATES; IT IS SIMPLY A DECLARATION IN PRINCIPLE AGAINST A PRIORI EXCLUSION OF THE COMMUNISTS, WHILE RESERVING TO THE PSI A WIDE MEASURE OF DISCRETION AND FLEXIBILITY IN HOW TO INTERPRET AND APPLY THAT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE.

3. PSI FLEXIBILITY ON THE ISSUE OF RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS APPEARS CLEARLY IN THE UNEQUIVOCAL DECLARATION THAT THE PSI WILL PURSUE ITS POLICY OBJECTIVE IN FULL "AUTONOMY" FROM BOTH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE COMMUNISTS. AUTONOMY WAS A CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE CONGRESS. THE LEFT-WING OF THE PARTY (LED BY RICCARDO LOMBARDI) ATTEMPTED TO GET APPROVAL FOR A POLICY THAT WOULD ALIGN THE PSI WITH THE PCI AND CONDITION FUTURE PSI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENTS ON PCI PARTICIPATION. LOMBARDI'S EFFORT WAS DEFEATED BY DEMARTINO'S ARGUMENT THAT THE PSI COULD NOT GIVE THE PCI A VETO OVER ITS ACTIONS, AND DEMARTINO'S POLICY OF NOT TYING THE TWO PARTIES TOGETHER WAS APPROVED. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE THE FACTIONAL STRAIT JACKET WITHIN WHICH THE CONGRESS WAS ORGANIZED, LOMBARDI'S STRENGTH WITHIN THE PARTY NEARLY DOUBLED (FROM 10 PERCENT TO ALMOST 20 PERCENT) AND REPORTING FROM THE CONSULATES AND OTHER SOURCES INDICATES THAT A PROPOSAL TO WORK FOR A PSI/PCI GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WOULD PROBABLY BE OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED BY THE PARTY'S RANK AND FILE.

4. IN ORDER TO DEFEAT CALLS FOR PREFERENTIAL COOPERATION
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WITH THE PCI, DEMARTINO HAD TO IN THE END ABANDON HIS OWN CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR SHORT-TERM COOPERATION WITH THE DC AND PUT ALL SHORT-TERM POSSIBILITIES ON AN EQUAL PLANE. HE ALSO HAD TO ACCEPT A CLEAR EXCLUSION OF PSI SUPPORT FOR OR RETURN TO A GOVERNMENT COALITION WITH THE DC BEFORE THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THIS LEAVES THE PSI WITH THE LIKELIHOOD OF NO CHANGE IN ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT (OR, ANY LIKELY

SUCCESSOR) PRIOR TO ELECTIONS AND VIRTUALLY COMPLETE FLEXIBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

5. DEMARTINO WAS RE-ELECTED SECRETARY OF THE PARTY WITHOUT OPPOSITION. DESPITE THE FACT THAT HIS PROPOSALS WERE NOT ACCEPTED IN FULL, HE APPEARED TO COME OUT OF THE CONGRESS STRONGER THAN HE WENT IN, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THERE WERE NO VISIBLE CHALLENGERS AND HE CLEARLY OVERSHADOWED HIS ONLY KNOWN RIVAL, GIACOMO MANCINI. THE CONGRESS DID NOTHING, HOWEVER, TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OF THE LIKELY FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY. BETTINO CRAXI, DEPUTY SECRETARY, REMAINS IN A STRONG POSITION, BUT IS TO THE RIGHT OF DEMARTINO AND THERE IS THUS A QUESTION WHETHER THE LEFT-MOVING MAJORITY OF THE PARTY WOULD ACCEPT AND FOLLOW HIM.

6. COMMENT: THE CONGRESS CONFIRMED WHAT WE HAVE LONG BELIEVED TO BE THE CASE: THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PARTY IS TO THE LEFT OF ITS PRESENT LEADERSHIP. LIKE THE COUNTRY, THE PARTY IS SHIFTING TO THE LEFT, AND THE RANK AND FILE OF THE PARTY ARE ON THE WHOLE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH THE COMMUNISTS NOW, AS THEY ARE IN FACT DOING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THUS, WHILE THE CONGRESS ACCEPTED DEMARTINO'S ASSERTION THAT THE PCI HAS A LONG WAY TO GO ON THE ROAD TOWARD DEMOCRACY (REF. A, PARA 4), THE ATTITUDE OF THE PARTY'S BASE OBVIOUSLY RAISES QUESTIONS AS TO HOW LONG THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE STRONG RESERVE EXPRESSED BY DEMARTINO.

7. THE RESULTS OF THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS MAY WELL PRESENT THE PSI WITH A SERIOUS DILEMMA. A DC
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DECISION TO MOVE TOWARD COALITION WITH THE PCI, OR A PCI DECISION TO SWITCH TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT, WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD PUT AN END TO PSI "AUTONOMY" AND PLACE IT IN A POSITION THAT WOULD SERIOUSLY THREATEN ITS SURVIVAL AS A MAJOR PARTY. IT COULD NOT REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN EITHER OF THE ALTERNATIVES MENTIONED, BUT IF IT DID IT WOULD FIND IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO CARVE OUT A REAL ROLE FOR ITSELF. IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT THE PRESENT PSI LEADERSHIP SHOWS A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR COOPERATION WITH THE DC AFTER THE NEXT ELECTIONS--ON CONDITION THAT THE DC WILL GIVE THE PSI AND ITS PROGRAMS A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE ROLE--FOR IT IS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE THAT WILL PERMIT AUTONOMY AND A REAL POSSIBILITY OF GROWTH.

8. THE CONGRESS DID NOT TAKE A POSITION ON EARLY ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH ITS DECLARED REFUSAL TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY INTERPRETED AS MAKING EARLY ELECTIONS DIFFICULT TO AVOID. NEVERTHELESS, THE PSI WILL BE CAREFUL TO EVADE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY ACTION THAT WOULD CAUSE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO FALL, FOR IT DOES NOT WISH TO BE TAGGED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVING PRECIPITATED EARLY ELECTIONS IN THE PRESENT TROUBLED ECONOMIC SITUATION. VOLPE

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